

Michaud Votes Against Shortsighted Energy Bill

Thursday, April 21 2005

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D.C. - As Maine continues to face record gas prices, the House of Representatives voted on Thursday to pass a shortsighted energy bill that focuses on domestic production and does very little for long-term investment in renewable energy and conservation, while providing massive subsidies and tax breaks for the largest oil corporations.

"In what is one of the worst bills I've seen this Congress, it became obvious today that too many people in Washington are worried about profits of the largest oil companies and do not care about passing legislation that can lower gas prices for American families," said Congressman Michaud.

The bill is very similar to the conference agreement adopted by the House last year - except that it permits oil and gas production in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The bill provides liability protections for manufacturers of MTBE, a fuel additive which has polluted water supplies in Maine. Cleaning up MTBE will cost the states billions of dollars, especially if manufacturers are exempted from responsibility. The bill provides \$8.1 billion in tax incentives over 11 years, 93% of which are for domestic production of oil and gas and other traditional energy supplies, but it does not increase efficiency standards for conventional cars. Despite a failed amendment to strip the provision, the bill gives the federal government explicit authority to approve liquified natural gas (LNG) facilities.

"Instead of increasing fuel efficiency standards or reducing our dependence on foreign oil, this legislation gives subsidies to big energy companies and continues our dependence on fossil fuels that pollute the environment and increase our dependence on unstable regions of the world," said Congressman Michaud.

"In decision after decision, House leadership chose to side with big oil companies instead of the consumers that we are supposed to be representing," said Congressman Michaud. "Just yesterday, a federal judge ruled that a community

affected by MTBE should be able to move forward and make its case. This bill sides with oil companies and gives them a waiver on any charge of wrongdoing. Instead of allowing communities to say if they want LNG in their communities, this bill says that the federal government knows best--that is wrong."

Ironically
passing just one day before Earth Day, the bill also fails to protect the environment and address the most important natural resource issues facing Maine and America.

"It's
bad enough that this bill will not lower gas prices, but it is a terrible bill for the environment as well," said Congressman Michaud. "The bill completely fails to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, protect drinking water, or preserve clean air standards. It does not even recognize the existence of global climate change."

Instead of this shortsighted bill, Congressman Michaud supported amendments to the bill that would have increased automobile fuel efficiency standards, funded renewable energy research, and invested in conservation programs.

"America
is the world leader in so many technological fields, but we are falling behind on energy research, and families are paying the price at the pump. We need to invest in cars and trucks that use less gas and electricity that is not generated with fossil fuels. With these investments we can design an energy policy that will create jobs, protect the environment, and make our country safer by reducing our dependence on foreign oil."

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